

Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review -
Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules
and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202
of the Telecommunications Act of 1996,
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking,
MM Docket No. 02-277, (rel. Sept. 23, 2002)

To: The Secretary, FCC Commissioners, and Chief, Media Bureau

What follows are my comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. I ask the FCC not to relax media ownership rules. I think the programming choices and the amount of local news on TV stations and in newspapers would shrink, just as it has on FM radio since those ownership rules were relaxed.

For instance, if the Newspaper/Broadcast Cross-Ownership Rule is changed, this would have a negative impact on the audience, journalists, and potential media outlet owners. A company that owns a newspaper and a TV station in the same market would be likely to control the news content of both, resulting in fewer contrasting opinions expressed in that market. Therefore, this change would diminish the amount of public debate on issues of the day, especially on local issues. The consolidation would likely lead to layoffs, including of journalists, and it would lead to sharing of news content between the two outlets. Fewer journalists covering fewer stories would result in the public hearing fewer sources express their points of view. This outcome would be bad for the public as well as for journalists.

Finally, allowing consolidation would lead to diminishing the total number of outlet owners. That is, fewer people would have the opportunity to own stations and program them as they see fit, based on their knowledge of the communities in which these stations are based. This would have an impact on programming diversity, as well as would the likely decrease in the percentage of outlets owned by minorities and women.

These media ownership rules were put in place to preserve the airwaves, which belong to the public, from being dominated by only a few people or companies. Dismantling Newspaper/Broadcast Cross-Ownership Rule, as well as other rules that prevent an increase in the consolidation of media ownership, would limit the public's knowledge of events and issues, thus limiting public debate, and it would limit the opportunities for people who want to own one or a handful of media outlets. I am afraid such changes would make TV stations and newspapers extremely homogeneous. Please keep the rules.

I support the FCC's plan to hold a public hearing on these matters in Richmond, Va., in February. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rachel A. Hardy
journalist

